

**TOPIC:                    PROPOSAL TO OFFER A DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE  
DEGREE PROGRAM AT MESA STATE COLLEGE**

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**I.        SUMMARY**

This agenda item requests approval for Mesa State College (MSC) to offer a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program. Department of Higher Education (DHE) staff recommends approval of this program with the understanding that no student enrollment will occur until the 2011 academic year to allow for accreditation of the program and for Mesa State to be recognized as a doctoral degree granting institution by the Higher Learning Commission.

**II.       BACKGROUND**

The following is summarized from Mesa State's proposal:

The proposed Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program is designed for nurses who are interested in assuming an advanced practice nursing role and a Family Nurse Practitioner. In addition, the advance nursing practice cognate will prepare students for national specialty certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner and state licensure as an Advance Practice Nurse.

The DNP curriculum for Mesa State College is based on the "Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice" also identified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

The proposed D.N.P. degree is built upon the generalist foundation acquired through a baccalaureate or advanced generalist master's in nursing. Because different entry points exist, the curriculum will be individualized for students based on their prior education and experience. Some students may choose to complete a D.N.P. on their pathway to a D.N.P.; others will focus entirely on the D.N.P. curriculum. The proposed D.N.P. is the final step on the nursing career ladder at Mesa State College, which would allow a student to progress through the full range of nursing education options from a Practical Nurse certificate through the doctoral program.

Upon approval by the Mesa State Board of Trustees and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, the Health Sciences Department head will notify the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, which is the accrediting agency for the B.S.N. program at Mesa State College. Specifically, C.C.N.E. accredits baccalaureate degree nursing programs, master's degree nursing programs, and clinical nursing doctorates that are practice-focused and have the title Doctor of Nursing Practice. C.C.N.E. accreditation

decisions are retroactive to the first day of that degree program's most recent C.C.N.E. on-site evaluation.

### **ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT**

The Doctor of Nursing Practice program supports the role and mission of Mesa State College. The statutory mission states:

*There is hereby established a college at Grand Junction, to be known as Mesa state college, which shall be a general baccalaureate and graduate institution with moderately selective admission standards. Mesa state college shall offer liberal arts and sciences, professional, and technical degree programs, and a limited number of graduate programs. Mesa state college shall also maintain a community college role and mission, including career and technical education programs. Mesa state college shall receive resident credit for two-year course offerings in its commission-approved service area. Mesa state college shall also serve as a regional education provider. C.R.S. 23-53-101*

Mesa State College has two previously approved graduate programs; the Master of Business Administration in 1996 and the Master of Arts in Education in 2006.

### **EVIDENCE OF NEED/DEMAND FOR THE PROGRAM:**

Currently, no educational institution in western Colorado offers graduate nursing education programs. Nurses who desire graduate education must attend programs offered by schools on the Front Range of Colorado (UCD, UCCS, UNC, Regis), online programs (Capella, University of Phoenix, Walden University) or out-of-state programs. Given the geographic location of Mesa State College in relation to these other state institutions, it is anticipated that students from western Colorado may choose to attend a program closer to home at Mesa State College.

During a program accreditation site visit of Mesa State College's B.S.N. program, an external reviewer recommended development of a D.N.P. program. The nursing faculty has kept the development of a graduate program as a "faculty goal" each year over the past ten and is frequently discussed during strategic planning conversations.

Colorado's shortage of qualified nursing faculty at its two-year nursing schools is three times the national average; the shortage at four-year schools is nearly double the national average. The lack of qualified instructors is one reason more than 2,600 applicants were turned away from nursing programs in Colorado in 2003.

The mission of Mesa State College provides an opportunity to offer nursing education at the baccalaureate (B.S.N.) and community college level (Practical Nursing and L.P.N. to A.A.S. degrees). At present, Mesa State is the only college in Colorado offering this

type of career ladder. The addition of graduate nursing education program would allow a nurse to progress through all levels of nursing education.

#### **RESOURCE NEEDS**

Mesa State's Health Sciences Department has four nursing faculty who are doctorally-qualified and one who will be "all but dissertation" by fall 2010. Several of the current nursing faculty are interested in teaching graduate courses so additional part-time faculty will need to be hired to cover B.S.N. courses.

No new capital expenditures are anticipated, although there may be need for some advanced physical assessment equipment.

Faculty office space is at capacity, thus new offices for graduate faculty will be need to house the additional personnel.

Additional library resources will be required to support the D.N.P. program.

### **III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Department staff has collaborated with the institution on building a framework to assist in determining the fit of the program with the statutory role and mission. Within the framework, variables have been discussed to ensure the centrality of institutional role and mission statements. Mesa State College has provided DHE with the following data requested by staff in order to make such a determination.

1. Number of two digit CIP categories of undergraduate/graduate programs: 25/2
2. Total instructional costs for undergraduate/graduate programs: \$55,323,500/\$526,800
3. Fall and Spring FTE enrollment for undergraduate/graduate programs: 6549.9/44.2
4. Number of degrees awarded by undergraduate/graduate: 869/39

The proposed program shows consistency with Mesa State's statutory role and mission of offering limited graduate offerings. The College's graduate programming utilizes two CIP codes – for business and education – representing approximately 1% of total instructional costs, less than 1% of student FTE enrollments, and reflects 4% of total degrees awarded.

These programs build on Mesa State's commitment to advancing educational attainment in Western Colorado, and partially meet the expectations of the College's role as a Regional Education Provider by providing rural access to a high demand field not readily available in the region.

Mesa State College anticipates initial offerings in Spring 2011, pending approval from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129 (6)(b), department staff finds that the proposed program fits the centrality of the institution's statutory role and mission.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program submitted by Mesa State College with the understanding that the program will be accredited and HLC recognition is obtained for doctoral degrees before students are permitted to enroll.**

**VI. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

Copies of all relevant statute and policy are on file in the Academic Affairs Office.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. §23-5-129 (6)(b)